

Paris Regrets

By Amanda Lepp

I had regretted every single thing that I had done to my dad the day before and hoping that I had a second chance, I turned the corner into room 284 where my dad had been held. I jumped to his bed side and tried to give him a kiss.

I soon heard the heart monitor start to slow down. "NO", I cry, "This isn't going to happen I didn't even get to have a full life with him."

This isn't fair. Don't go, please dad don't leave me. I'm sitting at my father's bed side crying, weeping, and trying to get my dad to look at me, I had no luck. His eyes are still closed...it's worth a shot.

"Dad, I am so sor.....r....y."

Just as I get out the "y" in sorry the heart monitor stops. Everything went silent. I try to scream for a nurse, but nothing comes out. I was too shocked. My dad is my whole life. It would all be over.

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Hi! I am Holly StarZ. I was born and raised in L.A. California. It's great to be 14 and being...well... me! But having 2 younger brothers and sisters anything could go wrong in my life. It's true what you hear that my life is very interesting but no one in my family was ready for what was going to happen later that day.

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It was just another morning in my house. I was awoken by the loud "BRING!" of my alarm clock. I jumped out of bed like a kangaroo, slipped into my favorite pair of fluffy slippers waiting for me on the side of my bed, grabbed my satin robe and slowly, and gracefully walked toward my gold mirror my father had gotten me in Paris a year before. Shuffling over to my mirror I tell myself,

"Hey, I am really lucky to be in this type of house and have both parents who love me and care for me."

Taking a closer look at my hair I was disgusted of how it looks and slowly walked out of my room and took a full force bolt down the long hallway to my bathroom. No one was there! I breathed a sigh of relief as I stepped in to tame my wild hair. As I slowly and carefully brushed my long wavy light brown hair I wondered how mom was going to cope with lime disease and having my father over seas for who knows how long.

After those scary thoughts I calmed my nerves with the humming of the song that was deeply loved by my father. I quick grabbed my toothbrush, brushed my teeth and ran back over to my bedroom. Once there I glanced over

at the picture of my dad and I, when I was younger at the county carnival.

It's those memories that matter the most", I thought to myself.

I carefully stroked the picture of my father as I mumble to myself "Don't worry dad everything will be ok when you get home. Please don't worry and be careful." As I finished praying to god that my dad would be ok, I heard the slow breathing of my mother sneaking up behind me.

"Oh, you caught me", my mom said sarcastically.

"Ha...Ha...Ha." I laughed at the thought of my mom actually pulling a trick on me.

"Come on Holly you better get going so we aren't late for school again!" my mom said in a gentle tone.

"Ok, mom I was just making sure that dad always knows that I am thinking and praying about him."

"Don't worry Holly, he always knows that you are thinking about him. Now come on we have to get going."

Taking my mom's thoughts into consideration I act like I am at the most beautiful ball ever. As I masquerade to my door I try to prevent it from squeaking but all of my luck is reassured with the soft "SQUEAK!" of the door. Ignoring the squeak I galloped to my closet, picked out the light pink silk dress my dad had gotten for me in England , grabbed my coat, backpack, and flip-flops as I headed out the door.

I gracefully parade down the long marble staircase as I hear my limos sweet horn.

I scream to my mom, "No time for breakfast I am going to be late!"

As I run out the door I hear a faint, "Ok sweetie see you later", but I don't reply I am too late. I thought to myself as I departed from our long driveway.

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All day at school I couldn't concentrate. My mind kept on going back to the thought of if my father died how would me; my mom, and my seven younger brothers and sisters get along without him. I glanced at the clock nineteen..... Twenty times. I wanted to make sure my mom was ok. I had a bad feeling of what was going to happen next.

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I had dazed off so much I hardly remember getting back into the limo and pulling up into the driveway. You know me, and I wouldn't normally do that, but with all of the things that are going on in my life right now how could I not.

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I rushed down the driveway trying to see if my mom was out in the garden like any other day. I sprint o the backyard more nervous then you could ever imagine. The first bad sign...my mom wasn't in her garden. As soon as the reality hit me a million thoughts were going through my head, "Was my dad ok? Was my mom sick? Did anyone die? Why isn't my mom in her garden...Why" before that

last thought could process through my brain I jumped through the open glass doors and saw my mom on the floor. With that I knew something was terribly wrong.

I bolted over to her and tried to give her some comfort but all I saw of her face was her hair so far deeply inserted in the pillow. I thought that she would never be able to get out. She handed me a piece of yellow paper as I repetitively ask her "Is he ok.....is he ok?" referring to my father. I looked at the yellow paper feeling like it is burning a hole in my hand.

"Do I have to open it mom?" I ask her in a worried tone.

"Yes, Holly you are the oldest child we have and I don't think that Jenna, John, Isabella, Christopher, Leah, Hunter, or Hannah can deal with what this yellow paper has to say. PLEASE!"

I looked at the yellow paper once again with a different perspective.

"He's not dead, He can't be dead, I know he can't."

"Holly just open the paper and read it, OK!"

I slowly unfold the yellow paper hoping for the best that my father was all right. I read it aloud. Here's what it looked like:

Dear Starz Family,

I am sorry to give you the news that General Starz has been severely injured. He must be put in immediate care. We are sending him to the best hospital in Paris called Hopital Necker-Enfants Malades. There he will be treated with the best medicine and doctors. General Starz will remain there for well until they say that he is well enough to go back home. It is my best advice that you and your family come up to meet us. You know love can be the best medicine for a brave soldier like general Starz. Give it some thought and if you think so too I will see you in Paris.

*Sincerely,
Captain Smith*

Oh no. "Mommy can we go please Can we go and see daddy at the hospital. The Captain said that love can be the best medicine for a strong soldier like daddy." I cried out to her like a 2 year old being separated from their family.

"Holly, honey of course we are going to go but I don't know that we can bring your brothers and sisters." My mom said as the tears poured down her face like Niagara Falls.

There was a moment of silence that was quickly disturbed by the ringing of the phone and the sound of our door bell. I knew what this meant my brother John was in trouble again at school and the door bell was my other brothers and sisters coming home from school.

"Holly get the door greet your brothers and sisters, then I want you give them something to eat. Lastly make sure that Hannah and Hunter (the twins)

aren't awake if they are carry them downstairs and put them in their play room. I will get the phone and make sure it is not someone for dad." My mom eventually finished her sentence as the doorbell rang once again.

"You got it mom. Do you need anything else while I am busy?" I asked with desperation that the last sentence finished the long list of chores ahead for me wouldn't be continued.

"Oh, if the twins are awake make sure that they aren't in dirty dippers, also change them into their underwear and I think that it just about covers it."

As I ran to the door to get my other brothers and sisters I noticed that they were all there. So that meant that the person on the phone wasn't my brother's teacher. It had to be someone for dad.

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After the days long events had come to a close I noticed that I hadn't seen my mom since dinner. I hoped that she was all right. I went to go and check her room and there she was once again on the bed with her face drowning in the pillow.

I walked over to her in suspicion not knowing what this was now about I sat down next to her and started stroking her long wavy blond hair.

"Mom", I say in the gentlest tone, "What's wrong?"

"Holly are all of the younger kids in bed."

"Yes" I replied scared of our family's future.

"That was the Captain himself."

As soon as she said that sentence I knew that something was terribly wrong. You see when your father, mother, brother.....if anyone you know is in the army then you know that when the Captain or General calls themselves that means that the worst possible thing happened to your friend or who ever.

"What did he say." I said stumbling to get those words out.

"The Captain said that daddy was shot again in the head when he was being moved to the helicopter and now they don't know what his fate is."

"This can't be happening mom. They have the wrong house. Dad is going to be fine. I KNOW THIS HE IS GOING TO BE FINE!" I scream in desperation.

"Holly calm down. Daddy will be fine but only if we pray for him tonight and leave first thing in the morning."

"But....But who will take care of everyone else?" I questioned

"Mimi is coming tomorrow and promised us that she wouldn't tell the kids until we got back with the news."

"I'll go and pack."

"Don't worry about that Holly I did that after dinner."

"Oh, so then I will go and pray for him. He will get better! He will come home!"

"Do whatever you feel is necessary for your father to come back to his house happy and healthy."

I don't say anything as I walked slowly up the marble stares to my bedroom in shock. "What else could have gone wrong tonight? It seems like no one wants my family to be together and happy. I wondered and thought these thoughts all night long. I am tossing and turning, I can't sleep, there is the pitter patter of the rain on the roof, my mother is still awake crying, and the twins Hannah and Hunter are screaming their throat out. Nothing would ever be the same in my house.

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The next morning I didn't wake up to my humming alarm clock I woke up to the shaking of my mother's hand.

"Holly wake up. Come on we have to get to the helicopter. Bob the helicopters' driver is waiting for us."

"What.....What time is it." I say in confusion.

"It's three o'clock in the morning. Meme is here and we have to go before daddy gets transferred to intensive care." My mom said in a hushed tone.

"Uh.....ok I will go and get my dress on, brush my hair and my teeth." I say with my eyes still closed.

"No time for that." my mom snaps, "We have to go now!"

I jump out of bed as I rub my eyes open. I see that my mom has laid out the green silk dress that was on the bottom of my closet. My mom said that there was no time to brush my hair so I run to my bathroom grabbed my toothbrush and slammed toothpaste onto my brush.

"No time to be neat", I quick say to myself. I grab my coat from the banister in a flash and shuffle down the long marble stairs. My mom was already waiting for me at the door.

I catch a glimpse of Mimi in the kitchen trying to prepare for the next day. I try to wave as my mom grabbed my dress and tugged me outside I felt like something was missing. Like a part of me wasn't going to be there any more.

I look in my backyard and open my eyes to the loud buzzing of the helicopter ready to take off. My mom would normally be the one to tell me to take my time but right now it wasn't about looking good, or about taking my time. It was about going to see my dad in his time of need.

I glanced backward to try and see the house that I would leave behind for Paris life for who knows how long. I was going to stay in Paris as long as it took for my dad to get better. I would not leave him alone.

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It was time to go and see my dad. I strap on my seatbelt and glance out the window. I see we are slowly but surly lifting up off the ground.

Now it has been about 2 hours and I see the sea coming into view. This makes me feel like I am really accomplishing something. My dad will get better, my family will get better, and I will not feel like a part of me is missing.

Not knowing that my words would eat me up the next couple of days I daze out the window, and slowly let my eye lids close together.

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We were going to Hôpital Necker- Enfants Malades. The best hospital in Paris, France for gun shot wounds. The bad dreams that I was having were getting worse I heard a loud gun shot thinking that it was real I jumped up and screamed to my mom.

"Mom they are coming to get me. Please mom help me they are coming to get me!" I scream at the top of my lungs.

No luck for me she was still sleeping. I slowly walk over to her window to see what was going on. I saw nothing. There was nothing there and the sounds had stopped.

"What was going on? Why was I imagining the world like it was the end of everything?"

They had said that we might have some weird dreams because of what we were going through but I thought what had just happened in my mind was to extreme." I think to myself.

I see my mom flinch and then start to cry. She was repetitively saying my name.

"Holly.....Holly.....no don't do that you are going to kill yourself."

I hear her answering herself. "Mom if I can't be with dad for the rest of my childhood then I don't want to be here at all!"

This dream was freaking me out I needed to stop/end this dream. I nervous but I wanted my mom to be ok not sad. This dream was going to have to stop now if my mom didn't want the memory of this terrible dream in her mind. I slowly lean towards my mom nervous but prepared I started to shake her gently.

It wasn't working. I tried harder. Now I see her eyes slowly start to open. Startled my mom was starting to come closer to me with that gilt face she knew I couldn't resist. She grabs me and hugs me until I start to lose my breath.

"Please mom let me go I can't breath", I pleaded in a high pitched voice.

My mom slowly releases her grip and says, "Holly you are alive. You didn't jump off that bridge." It was weird but at that moment I wasn't really looking at my mom I was looking out the window and saw that bridge my mom was talking about. I jump in fear and question myself "Was everything that I had dreamed going to come true? Were the settings like my mom dreamed going to come true for me.....too?"

Everything in my world was falling apart. I was a wreck, my world was being turned upside down!

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The next day rolled around and we were finally in Paris. The night had been long but I had a feeling that today was going to be even longer. My mom was going to call Mimi when I heard the room phone ring. I go to pick it up and hear the voice of someone very familiar.

Is this on the helicopter?

"Hello. Who is this."

"What do you mean who is this." The voice on the other side of the phone said.

"Daddy?"

"Ya, who else would it be?"

"DADDY! I am so happy that you called. I mean I knew that you were ok but now I know for sure."

What I was saying was shortly interrupted by my father.

"Sweetie"

"Yes Daddy"

"Let me talk to your mother."

"Uh, ok", I replied "Is everything ok."

"I will tell mommy and then she will have the decision of telling you or not ok"

"Uh, ok" I reply nervously, "I guess I will see you tomorrow. What is the number of the room you are staying in?"

"That was something that I was going to tell your mother but I guess that I could tell you too. I am staying in room number 284. I am on the 5th floor, but they are thinking about moving me so give the phone to your mother and I will see you later."

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I had some extra time on my hands and thought about exploring the city. The first thing that I had to do was go to the Eiffel Tower. I can't explain how cool it was being able to walk through a large city without your parent. I thought that everything was going to go good but instead everything went great.

Why didn't they go to the

First thing when I went on the bus I didn't have to pay. This old man saw me getting on and offered to pay for my toll. I couldn't resist but say yes and then he said something to the effect of....

"Yous êtes la bienvenue" Which I think means you're welcome but I really have no clue. I tried to say thank you but I ended up saying something to the effect of Avez-vous des crêpes. He then looked at me like something was wrong with me or something.

This nice boy who spoke both English and French told me that I had said "Do you have any Pancakes." I later felt stupid thanked the boy who told me what I had really said and jumped off the bus remembering that the reason that I was going through everything that I had been was for my father.

Later I figured out how to say thank you which was "Merci". After that mix-up my confidence had gone down substantially and now I knew if I had to talk to anyone I would have to find someone that could speak both English and French.

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Here I was at the amazing and ginormous Eiffel Tower. I had only dreamed about this experience for my entire life. All my childhood when my dad would come home from overseas I would ask him if he went to Paris and if he saw the Eiffel Tower. One day I was seven years old and my father was coming home from overseas and my father surprised me with the news that he had been deployed to Paris.

My father also gave me the giant surprise of having taken up close and amazing high definition pictures of the Eiffel Tower. I just freaked out. Those pictures have been hanging in my room with the nicest picture frames. Back to the real world now.

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I turned the corner and started to run down the long hallway when I saw this really cute boy coming down the hallway. I was running too fast I couldn't stop I really needed to stop but I just couldn't. My mom had told me not to fall in love with any French boys but I just couldn't resist falling in love with this boy. Everything about him was perfect.

He had short and spiky soft looking brown hair. Was always wearing what was in style and in my eyes didn't have one bad thing about him. The way he looked at me I knew that we had something really incredible and that we were going to be together forever.

When I tried to talk to him the only thing that I could make out of what he was saying was the fact that he thought that I was cute. This is what he said, "Salut mon nom est John. Quel est votre nom? Vous êtes tellement mignon. Ne laissez personne vous dire autre chose. J'espère que je peux vous revoir peut-être plus tard ce soir au Moulin de la Galette. Rendez-vous là-bas. Bye."

This is what he would have said in English " Hello my name is John. What is your name? You're so cute. Do not let anyone tell you otherwise. I hope I can see you maybe later this evening at the Moulin de la Galette. Meet you there. Bye."

All I was thinking in my head was he is so cute and I need to see him again or else I feel like I might die. I wrote down what he said and when I went home that day my mom had told me what he had said.

"Aw, I can't believe that he thinks that I am cute."

My mom giggles and tells me that all french boys think that american girls are cute. I didn't listen to what she had said because my mind kept on drifting back off to that boy. I think that I remember him saying that his name was John. The coincidence is that I have always loved the name John and my mother said that if I would have been a boy my name would have been John so now everything to me is fitting together like a puzzle.

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The next day I woke up and over breakfast was telling my mom of the horrible dream that I had been thinking about all morning long. Nothing was going right today but I don't know why because yesterday meeting John and all I

*This is a great
name - I
wanted to story.*

thought that everything was going to continue to be good. Sad that I was wrong I walked over to my bedroom smaller then the room that I have at home but to me it worked just fine.

I get my silk dress and my purse and hop in the car with my mom so that we could go and see my dad. I thought that everything was going to be fine with my dad but I didn't know what he was really going to look like. I knew it was going to be bad when we were in the elevator and my mom hit the button for the 9th floor which was for intensive care patients only. I started to get very scared and when I walked into my father's room I was even more frightened.

I saw that he was hooked up to a bunch of wires. There was something on his head, there was an IV in both of his arms, and there were breathing tubes in his nose. I knew that he was my dad and that he talk scary but the sight of having everything hooked up to him like that was a little frightening.

Anyway I was so excited to see my father. I hadn't seen him in a long time and I thought that just being able to see my dad was the best thing that could ever happen to me this week.

"Hey dad. How are you doing with all of the nurses here? Are they treating you nicely?" There is no reply. I was getting very scared and thinking that he was going to die I went to his bed side and felt his hand. My mom told me that when they were giving him is treatments they had to give him this medicine that makes him act funny. My mom told me that we would stay as long as they would let us and then we would go home.

"Mommy do I have anything to eat here?"

"No we don't but the hospital has vending machines and a Cafeteria downstairs you can go down there and eat if you want."

"Ok, thank you. Do we need any money for the food"

"No you can just go by yourself, eat, and then come back up to us. OK" my mom replied.

"Alright see you soon."

It felt like we were there for a thousand years. Finally my mom said that we were going to leave soon and that she just had to go to the bathroom and then we would leave. As soon as she left I started to talk to my dad about John wanting to get his approval I tried to talk him up real good.

I opened my eyes that were shut to tell him the whole story of what had happened the day before.

"Daddy you.....you are awake."

"That's right Holly I am awake and you were asking for my permission to date this boy weren't you?"

"Ya, so what do you think. Can I date him?"

"What NO WAY Holly you are only 14 and you think that you can date a boy in Paris the city of love? Like I had said before NO WAY HOLLY YOU ARE NOT GOING TO DATE THIS BOY JOHN"

"But dad you aren't being very fair. I fell in love and I can't help the way that I fell."

"Love.....Love you don't know what love is you are only fourteen years old. Come and talk to me when you are twenty then I think that you MIGHT know the meaning of the word love."

"You know what dad THIS IS MY LIFE AND YOU CAN'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO!"

"DON'T YOU BE YELLING AT ME YOUNG LADY!"

"BUT YOU ARE YELLING AT ME SO WHY CAN'T I YELL AT YOU!"

"BECAUSE I AM YOU FATHER AND I DAON'T WANT YOU TO BE TALKING TO ME THAT WAIY!"

"You know what dad fine I came here to talk to you about this because I was in love now all I want is for you to fall off the face of this earth."

"LEAVE!"

I grabbed my stuff and stormed out the room. After the fight I was sorry of what happened but I was glad that I stood up for myself in front of my father.

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As the next day rolled around.....

I had regretted every single thing that I had done to my dad the day before and hoping that I had a second chance, I turned the corner into room 284 where my dad had been held. I jumped to his bed side and tried to give him a kiss.

I soon heard the heart monitor start to slow down. "NO", I cry, "This isn't going to happen I didn't even get to have a full life with him."

This isn't fair. Don't go, please dad don't leave me. I'm sitting at my father's bed side crying, weeping, and trying to get my dad to look at me, I had no luck. His eyes are still closed...it's worth a shot.

"Dad, I am so sor.....r....y."

Just as I get out the "y" in sorry the heart monitor stops. Everything went silent. I try to scream for a nurse, but nothing comes out. I was too shocked. My dad is my whole life. My life was over that was it.

The Next Day.....

The next day rolls around and I had just woken up. I go into the kitchen and ask my mother.

"So, mom when are we going to go and see dad for the day?"

I was super surprised when I looked over into the family room where my mom was and saw that she was crying.

"You were there yesterday. Shouldn't you know what happened to him?"

I had thought it was all just a dream not real life. As my mom had told me this the smile on my face had changed into a sad and depressed look.

"The nurse said that he died from a heart attack caused from stress. I don't know how that could have happened. Were you and your father yelling at each other while I was gone? That was the only reason that we thought he might have died."

"Um, mom so here's what happened."

"Holly, I don't want you to lie to me I want to speak the truth and nothing but the truth."

"Ok, here's what really happened. When you went to the bathroom I was talking to dad about the boy that I met. He wasn't being very nice or supportive about it and he said that all boys in Paris fall in love with American girls and that we American girls can't look past their looks. When he said that I felt very depressed and upset with him nothing could change my mind about dating John not even daddy."

"Holly get to the point will you we don't have all day!"

"Alright. Then I asked for his permission to date John but he said that I didn't know what love really was and that I shouldn't waste my breath with this boy."

"What happened to make your father so mad?"

"Well, I started screaming at him that he couldn't tell me how to live my life, and then he screamed at me back saying that I shouldn't talk to him that way."

"Yes, what happened next?"

"Well, he was screaming at me more and more then I got really angry and then stormed out of the room."

"So you are the thing that made your father die."

"Hey, I am not a thing and I didn't want my father to die because of me."

"Ok, I was wrong but still that was very wrong for you to do that to your father especially when he was in the hospital in intensive care."

"Sorry, mom I have to go and meet John at the Moulin de la Galette today. I have to go and get ready."

"I thought that your father said that you couldn't date John."

"Well, mom I really wanted to do this and I told you before that this is my life and I want to do what I want to do."

"Ok, I give you permission to go on the date with John, but think about what I have to say. You will disappoint your father when he is looking down at us from Heaven."

"That might be true mom but I want to live my life not dad's life."

"That's fine Holly you live your life."

I left the house with some disappointment in myself and I am sure that my mother had doubt and disappointment too but today was the day that I was going to be set free and ready to live my own life. I got to the Moulin de la

Galette turned the corner and saw John. He was wearing a suit and tie and what other in his hands but a box of chocolate and a single rose.

I look at him with amazement. "How dumb am I? I am in the city of love and I forgot to bring anything for him." I thought to myself in curiosity.

All I can say was the date went great. When we were coming out of the restaurant I told him that my father had died and that it was all my fault. He relid with this..... "Je suis désolé pour votre perte mais maintenant nous pouvons être ensemble sans votre papa."

This man told me that John really said, "I am sorry for your loss but now we can be together without your dad."

I can't believe he said that. That's it "WE'RE THROUGH JOHN!!!"

I tell my mother later that I was sorry for the way that I acted and that I will never let a boy come in between my family like that again.